ST. GERMANS

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S

ANNUAL REPORT.

1907.

R. THORNTON MEADOWS, M.B., C.M., M.D., D.P.H.,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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To the Chairman and Members

OF THE

St. Germans Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

IN submitting this Report of the general sanitary condition of your District for the year 1907, one cannot but notice the similarity between the vital statistics of this and last year; any slight difference being again in favour of this last year reported on.

The birth-rate is again lower, 17·59 per 1,000 compared with 18·49 of last year, still showing the same progressive decline that it has for the last 12 years. The illegitimate births this year number 7, as compared to 1 last year.

These illegitimate births do not represent the total number of births of this kind in this District, as I know that false declarations are made when these births are registered, the name of a father being given, when that reputed father is not the husband of the child's mother.

The death-rate is almost the same as last year, namely, 11·6 per 1,000 compared with 11·2. Out of over 173 deaths, 79 or more, that is one half, were in persons over 65, and only 18 were in children under one year.

Amongst the causes of death it will be noticed that 10 were due to influenza, which disease has been prevalent throughout the year, whilst last year we had no death from this cause. I believe this prevalence of influenza to be due to the continuous damp weather we had during 1907, which condition of atmosphere tends to a rapid distribution of this infectious disease. Phthisis accounted for 12 deaths, nearly the same as last year. Cancer was the cause in 10 cases, as compared with 8 last year.

There were only 3 cases of accidental deaths, as compared with 10 last year. This diminution is due to the completion of the Railway Works and the withdrawal of most of the men employed on them.

Our Zymotic death-rate is again lower—·47 per 1,000, as compared with ·74 of last year.

Under this heading we find 5 deaths from diphtheria, nearly all at Millbrook; one of puerperal fever at Millbrook; one from measles, and one from diarrhœa.

The Infantile death-rate is also lower, 68·96 per 1,000 births as compared to 73·22, and represents 18 deaths, as compared with 20. Two of these were of illegitimate children of the 7 born.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Of these diseases we have had 43 cases, considerably less than in previous years. In 1906 there were 52, and in 1905, 89.

I classify them as to cause and locality when it will be seen that with the exception of Millbrook, the District has been remarkably free from this class of disease.

Diphtheria	...	24
Entric Fever	...	3
Erysipelas	...	7
Scarlet Fever	...	8
Puerperal Fever	...	1

St. Germans District, 3. South District, 35. North District, 5.

To sum up, the general condition of the District is highly satisfactory, and shows a slight improvement on previous years.

In May a case of Cerebro-Spinal Fever was kindly brought to my notice in an isolated farm house in the St. Germans District, and I was invited to see the patient with his medical attendant, which I did on the following day. I found that the case presented all the classical symptoms of this affection and agreed with him as to the case.

I consider the medical attendant had not only done what he should in acquainting me with the existence of this case, although it was not notifiable, but had treated the Medical Officer of Health, and the District itself, in a commendably professional manner in placing every facility in dealing with the situation at my disposal.

This case was isolated and every precaution taken, and in view of any other case arising, and to justify the medical attendant in any procedure necessary, the disease was made a notifiable disease for a period by the District Council, and with the consent of the Local Government Board. The case ended fatally. No other case of a like kind was reported.

The diphtheria at Millbrook, of which there were 22 cases, took the form of dropping cases from February to September and caused 3 deaths.

Millbrook has always been the one place in our District which is responsible for nearly all our infectious disease, and considerable expense has been incurred in water and sewerage to check it.

The diphtheria this year was carefully followed up, and having eliminated all possible causes, except neighbourly intercourse, which we cannot combat except by an Isolation Hospital, we turned our attention to our comparatively new sewers, and here, from the exhaustive report of our Sanitary Inspector, we found things pretty bad, sewers badly graded, allowing the contents to run back, badly constructed man-holes, allowing an accumulation of fecal matter of considerable quantity to remain behind, the street ventilators mostly shut down, and not sufficient ventilators to take their place. These matters have been taken in hand and put right by the Council and whether or not this was the cause of the diphtheria, the fact remains that since the alterations have been made we have not had any more diphtheria in Millbrook.

In reference to this disease, all cases were determined by cultures obtained by the District Council, which supplies swabs and arranges for a bacterial examination.

We are still without any Isolation Hospital for ordinary cases. This deficiency could best be filled by conjoint action with Torpoint Urban District in the South, and Saltash Urban District in the North.

Our Small Pox Hospital of 4 beds has now been permanently placed on ground acquired for that purpose. It is far removed from any dwelling or highway, and in a nice situation. We have been fortunate in tapping a good spring for its supply of water.

The two old and insanitary dwellings in Kingsand, mentioned in my last report, have been closed, are now pulled down and converted into one healthy house, another is shortly to follow. Much of the old properties in Millbrook give us a great deal of trouble, being structurally difficult to make or keep sanitary.

Some of the owners of these properties, especially those whose ownership expires with a certain life have the greatest aversion to laying out any money on improvements, which though necessary, tend to further reduce their rental receipts, and it requires firmness on the part of the District Council to get the necessary work carried out.

Two cases of Anthrax in cattle were reported to me. The carcases were properly and completely destroyed.

One old slaughter house has been practically pulled down and replaced by a well paved well lighted and drained building, but still the whole question of the slaughtering of animals for human consumption is, as I explained in my last report, unsatisfactory.

The Midwives Act is a dead letter, so far in this district, as in a poor scattered district of 41,888 acres, there is only one certified or registered midwife, and she is a district nurse, who does little of this kind of work.

The Factories and Workshops Act has been worked satisfactorily. There have not been any proceedings taken under these Acts, and there have not been received any complaints or notices from the Inspectors.

ST. GERMANS DISTRICT.

This is as usual our most healthy district. There were only 3 cases of Infectious disease recorded, namely:—Scarlet Fever at Polbathic. No cases were reported from Downderry.

The Urinal at Downderry has been taken in hand, and will fill a want of long standing.

The drainage of Sea View Hotel is not satisfactory, as it fouls the beach where in summer many children are to be seen playing. The District Council are now considering this, and we expect to see the necessary work carried out before summer again comes.

THE SOUTH DISTRICT.

It is here in Millbrook that we have our infectious area, but still there is an improvement, compared with the last few years, as we have not had enteric fever there this year. The water supply though deficient, was not such a source of trouble owing to the very wet season, but yet it is a cause for anxiety. The improvement here in the sewers, consequent on the Diphtheria, has been of value, and I hope when more of the lake is drained and reclaimed, as I believe is the purpose of the Council this year, a better time will come for Millbrook.

We are still going ahead getting the old dwellings as sanitary as we can. This is the village that would reap benefit from an Isolation Hospital, as we cannot get any help from the majority of the people, in case of isolation in their own homes.

At Kingsand we had two cases mild Enteric Fever, no cause locally could be traced, as they occurred in one of the most sanitary houses in the place.

THE NORTH DISTRICT.

This District has been remarkably free from infectious disease, there having been 3 cases of diphtheria and 2 of erysipelas. The diphtheria cases were not dependent on each other, occurring in Districts far apart, and no cultures were taken from them as it was before the time the District Council authorised this procedure. Two of the cases were not reported till after death, and the friends quite opposed the question of the form of the disease as they had been informed that the cause of death was croup. These seem to have been cases of doubtful diagnosis, and are such as could have been determined by bacteriological examination.

The sewerage of Landrake has been completed on the West side this past year, and this, taken with the improvement on the East side in the previous year, has afforded most of the village an efficient system.

Nothing has yet been done in the question of Antony Passage water supply, concerning which I refer you to my two last annual reports.

GENERAL REMARKS.

It has not been found necessary to order the closing of any schools during 1907.

The Dairies have been kept in clean and wholesome condition, except in one particular, and a point I would and do impress on all persons who store milk—(I am satisfied with them).—I refer to the necessity of properly excluding flies from milk. I sometimes find that for ventilation, doors or windows are left open and unprotected, allowing flies to enter and drop in and die in the milk pans. I am of the strongest opinion that flies are carriers of infection and offensive matter and that it is a matter of the greatest importance that all milk should be protected against them by wiring the windows, and as a secondary precaution covering the milk pans with gauze.

About 50 houses have been on order put into a sanitary condition, and no proceedings have had to be taken to enforce these orders.

Vaccination has been efficient, but there is a greater tendency to obtaining exemption certificates, also to persons taking children to Plymouth and getting vaccination done in one place only.

The Medical Officer of Health thanks the District Council for their support during the past year, which he feels he can always depend on in helping him to carry out necessary sanitary improvements.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. T. MEADOWS.